



COMMITTEE STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA), Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Higher Education & Workforce Development: "Investing in Economic Mobility: The
Important Role of Hispanic Serving institutions and Other Minority Serving Institutions"**

March 2, 2022

(As prepared for delivery)

"Minority Serving Institutions are important contributors to the postsecondary education landscape. These institutions should be applauded for providing low-income, minority, and other disadvantaged students with greater access to postsecondary education.

"Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Predominantly Black Institutions, and other MSIs are known for being engines of upward mobility for millions of students, many of whom, may be first-generation college graduates, such as myself. Attending one of these institutions could be a path for many Americans to achieve a successful career. HSIs and MSIs deserve to be supported in this worthwhile mission.

"The COVID-19 pandemic put many colleges and universities through extreme challenges and hardships including lower than usual enrollment numbers and financial strain. I have been impressed to see how some postsecondary institutions are rising to the occasion in a way that is beneficial to students. We must encourage more colleges and universities to develop their own strategic plans for holding themselves accountable, cutting costs, and supporting the students and the institutions they serve.

"Minority serving institutions have received a historic infusion of federal funds including \$5.5 billion in grants as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), and the American Rescue Plan as well as \$255 million in mandatory funding from the Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education Act (FUTURE Act). This being said, relying on federal funds is inherently unstable.

"That is why it is important to encourage these institutions to be more innovative in the way they use taxpayer dollars, to develop strategic business models and diversify their revenue stream, and work with the private sector to help students complete their programs and excel in the workforce.

"Colleges and universities have a great opportunity to prioritize programming that advances their mission. Cutting back on administrative bloat and extraneous programs and targeting their investments towards high-impact strategies with proven outcomes for students' success will help these institutions both stay afloat and drive down the cost of tuition for their students.

"These institutions might also consider refocusing their course offerings and degree programs to align more closely with the needs of the workforce. We are going through a historic labor shortage. While the

importance of the soft skills gained through traditional higher education cannot be understated, they should be incorporated into programs that focus on developing technologies, high-skilled trades, and other in-demand programs needed to repair our workforce pipeline. Making these adjustments will attract more students and provide better outcomes.

“More colleges and universities should focus on helping our nation’s future workers develop the skills necessary to succeed in today’s workforce.

“With the cost of college rising and outcomes not always meeting students' expectations, we need to institute more transparency in higher education. No institution should be exempt from accountability, that includes HSIs and MSIs. To foster access, accountability, and completion for low-income and minority students seeking a postsecondary education we must reform the Higher Education Act to ensure institutions take more responsibility for the outcomes of their students.

“I know President Davidson has engaged in many of these difficult conversations and has been successful in tackling these issues head on. I look forward to hearing more from her in a few minutes. Thank you.”